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ABSTRACT

Presented in question answer format, the paper answers concerns about driver education and handicapped students in North Carolina. The following questions are addressed: What is the procedure for enrolling handicapped students in driver education? How are parents involved in making decisions about driver education for their handicapped child? What information should be included in the IEP (Individualized Education Program) related to driver education? Are there benefits for a handicapped student in enrolling in the classroom portion of driver education if the student will not be approved for behind-the-wheel instruction? At what grade level should information related to driver education be incorporated into the curriculum? What areas should be evaluated in the process of determining student eligibility for driver education? In which situations is a medical evaluation required for exceptional students to take driver education? Who is responsible for coordinating information from special education, driver education, related services and student services? What are the possible classroom and test modifications for handicapped students? How can driver education vehicles be modified? What resources are available to driver education teachers working with handicapped students? Who provides and pays for the transportation of handicapped students when driver education is scheduled after school hours? (DB)

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Learning About Driver Education and Handicapped Students

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PREFACE

The provision of appropriate special education and related services to North Carolina's handicapped children and youth has resulted in students who are better prepared for the challenges and opportunities of adult life. One important part of adult life--personal mobility through driving--has been denied many handicapped adults in past years. Through advancements in technological, evaluative, and instructional methods, more handicapped students will be able to enroll in driver education, obtain necessary support services, and become safe drivers.

This publication was developed by the Division for Exceptional Children in response to many requests for information related to driver education for handicapped students. We hope this information will assist local school systems in planning for driver education experiences. We invite additional questions and information on strategies that have been developed at the local level.



E. Lowell Harris, Director
Division for Exceptional Children
January, 1988

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Questions about Driver Education and Handicapped Students

1. What is the procedure for enrolling handicapped students in driver education?

Most handicapped students are enrolled in driver education using the same procedures as for non-handicapped students. When a question is raised about the enrollment of an individual student, the Individualized Education Program (IEP) Committee or the School-Based Committee should use the IEP as a vehicle for making a preliminary determination of whether the individual student has the judgment, maturity, and physical ability to make a safe driver. The IEP Committee has several options:

- . The IEP Committee could recommend that the student take driver education. The parent would have input for this decision.
- . If the Committee feels that additional data are necessary prior to reaching a decision, the Committee could recommend that the student be referred for a medical, psychological, and/or other related examination. It is recommended that the driver education teacher be a temporary member of the IEP Committee at the time the decision is made concerning driver education.
- . The Committee could decide that an individual student should not be enrolled in driver education. This decision, as documented in the IEP, is subject to annual review.

Very few students would require special deliberation. Only those students whose handicaps may raise a question about their ability to become safe drivers should be considered by the IEP Committee for further evaluation.

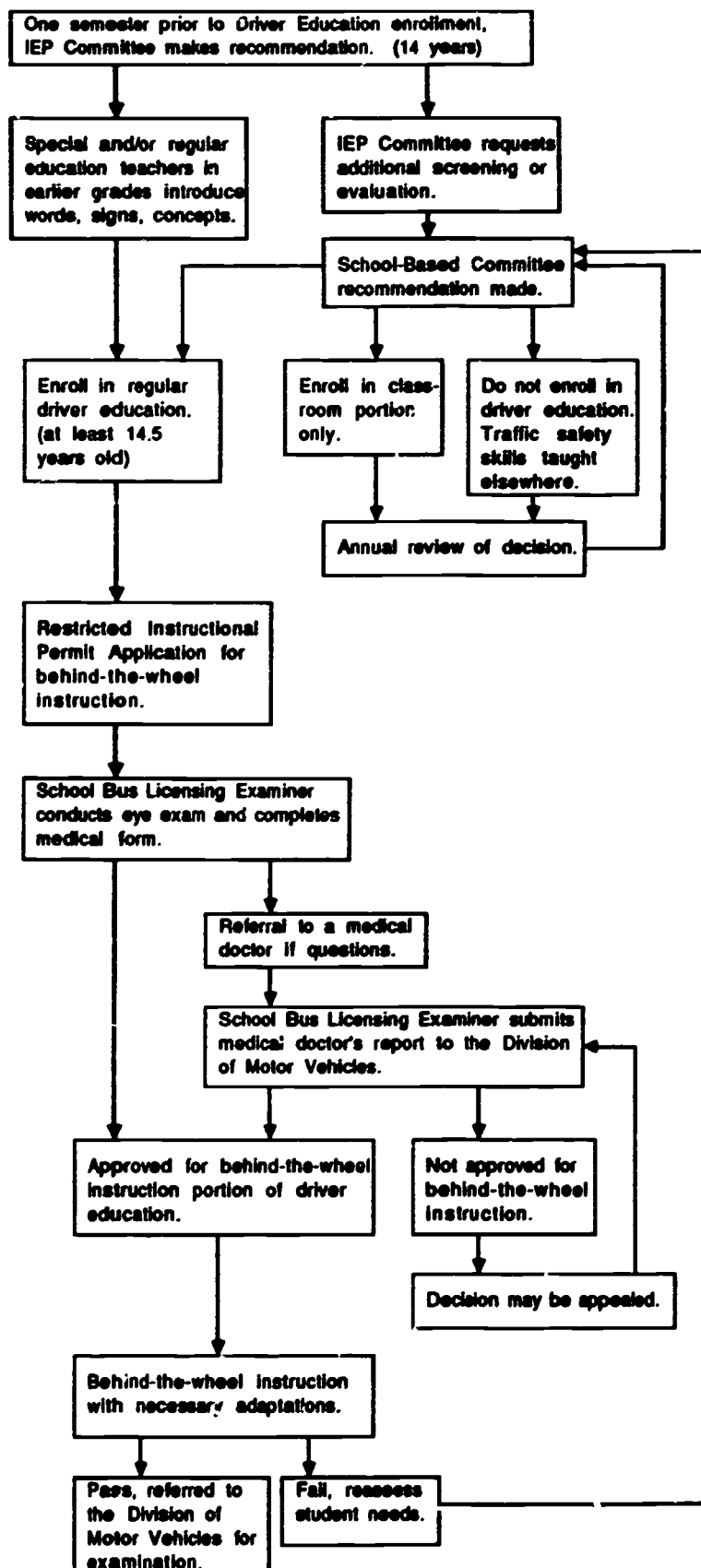
The flow chart on the following page illustrates the process of enrollment in driver education and the procedures involved in obtaining a driver's license.

2. How are parents involved in making decisions about driver's education for their handicapped child?

It is important that parents are involved in decisions about their child's education. The role of the parent in decision-making is a cornerstone of P.L. 94-142. The input of parents is particularly needed for driver education decisions. Parents can provide important information about their son or daughter on the following:

- . Medical history including medication usage,
- . Visual acuity and perception,
- . Adaptive behavior skills,
- . Auditory perception and the ability to follow directions,
- . Mature sense of responsibility and judgment, and
- . Family support for driving practice while on learner's permit.

Driver Education Procedures



Two publications which may be useful to parents or school staff working with parents are the Student-Parent Driving Guide soon to be available through the Division of Health, Physical Education, Safety, and Sports, Department of Public Instruction, and the Parent Involvement Program available through Safety Industries, P.O. Box 1137, 1st Avenue K, McGill, Nevada 89318.

3. What information should be included in the IEP related to driver education?

The Individualized Education Program should be specific to the extent of the handicapping condition. For mildly handicapped students it may only be necessary to list it as a course to be taken with no modification. For students with moderate to severe handicaps it may be necessary to recommend modifications in the class, adaptation in the car, and extended in-car observation time.

The IEP should indicate if the student will participate in the full driver education program (classroom and behind-the-wheel instruction) or if he or she will only enroll in classroom instruction as a safety awareness course.

4. Are there benefits for a handicapped student in enrolling in the classroom portion of driver education if the student will not be approved for behind-the-wheel instruction?

The IEP Committee may decide that a student should not have behind-the-wheel training but would benefit from the classroom portion of driver education. It is important that passengers in vehicles and pedestrians be aware of traffic safety and rules. In the case of an emergency, an individual may be required to steer or brake a moving vehicle. At the minimum, students should be taught traffic safety and rules in the special education class with the driver education teacher serving as a consultant to the special education teacher. The publications, K-5 Traffic Safety Education (Level A, K-1, Level B, 2-3, or Level C, 4-6) and North Carolina Driver Education Resource Guide, can be obtained for a nominal fee from the Division of Communication Services, North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

5. At what grade level should information related to driver education be incorporated into the curriculum?

Goals and objectives related to traffic safety should be included in the curriculum for regular education and/or special education in grades K through 9 or through the grade where driver education is offered. The resource guides identified in number four can assist the regular or special education teacher in developing appropriate instruction in this area.

6. What areas should be evaluated in the process of determining student eligibility for driver education?

The reason for doing an evaluation is to ascertain if a student with a handicap can learn the necessary skills to

be a safe driver. It is important to do comprehensive evaluation with a multidisciplinary team so that decisions about the student's ability to successfully complete driver education and be a safe driver are informed ones.

The multidisciplinary team for driver evaluation usually includes the occupational therapist, psychologist, and special education teacher. When indicated, a physician, physical therapist, speech pathologist, audiologist, rehabilitation engineer, and driver education instructor may be included. Many of these professionals may work with a local school administrative unit regularly and should be used to doing this type of evaluation. The student's permanent education record often has information related to many of the areas of concern such as intelligence, vision, hearing, and perceptual ability. Local personnel and existing information should be used when possible. However, there are times when outside services should be used. Listed below are some community resources available to assist a school unit in determining a student's eligibility to take driver education.

A. Hospitals and Centers

1. Thoms Rehabilitation Hospital
1 Rotary Drive
Asheville, North Carolina 28803
2. Charlotte Rehabilitation Hospital
1100 Blythe Boulevard
Charlotte, North Carolina 28203
3. Pitt County Memorial Regional Rehabilitation Center
P.O. Box 6028
Greenville, North Carolina 27823

B. Colleges

1. St. Andrews Presbyterian College
Laurinburg, North Carolina 28352

C. Rehabilitation Engineers

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Department of Human Resources

1. Western Region

E. D. (Jim) Smith
Vocational Rehabilitation Services
743 Fifth Street, SW
Hickory, North Carolina 28602
(704) 328-3914 or 6646

2. North Central Region

William B. Pendleton
Vocational Rehabilitation Services
1510-A Martin Street
Winston-Salem, North Carolina 27103
(919) 761-2290

3. South Central Region

Allison M. Bluj
Vocational Rehabilitation Services
436 N. Harrington Street
Raleigh, North Carolina 27603
(919) 733-7801

4. Eastern Region

Kenneth Pearson
Vocational Rehabilitation Services
226A Commerce Street
Box 797
Greenville, North Carolina 27834
(919) 756-3642 or (919) 756-3609

A charge is usually involved when outside services are used for additional evaluations. If the IEP Committee recommends that an individual student should be referred for additional evaluations by outside resources, Exceptional Children funds may be used to pay the costs. Vocational Rehabilitation may be able to obtain evaluations for students who are eligible.

The areas that should be evaluated during a driver evaluation include:

- . Medical History
(Are medications or treatments being used that can affect vision, judgment, or coordination?)
- . Physical Capabilities
 - active range of motion
 - functional physical strength and endurance
 - coordination
 - tone
 - sensory deficits
- . Reaction Time
- . Cognitive Level
 - attention span
 - problem solving/judgment
 - short term and auditory memory
- . Perceptual Ability
 - visual perception
 - somatosensory perception
 - perceptual motor
- . Directionality and Laterality and Motor Plannings
- . Behavior (i.e. how appropriately student controls anger, emotional stability)

A Task Force formed by Vocational Rehabilitation Services is developing a protocol for a driver evaluation that could be used by rehabilitation centers, hospitals, and similar facilities in North Carolina that evaluate individuals to determine their eligibility to drive. When this protocol is completed, it could be adopted for use in public schools.

7. In which situations is a medical evaluation required for exceptional students to take driver education?

Many medical or handicapping conditions may affect a student's ability to be a safe driver. Some examples include multiple sclerosis, spina bifida, cerebral palsy, head injury, seizure disorders, heart disease, diabetes, and emotional disorders. Medications or other medical treatments also may affect a student's vision, judgment, or coordination. It is important to have current medical information about each exceptional student who is being considered for driver education. The school bus licensing examiner in a local school administrative unit, acting as a representative for the Department of Motor Vehicles, determines if a student should have a medical evaluation before being enrolled in driver education. The medical disorders listed above are the most frequent ones that require a medical evaluation, but the final decision rests with the school bus licensing examiner. The parents of the student select the physician who will do the examination and are responsible for expenses incurred. If there is a physician that sees the student regularly, this would be an appropriate choice.

The medical evaluation should include, but not be limited to the following information:

- description of the medical or handicapping condition: its onset, prognosis, and effects the symptoms may have on the ability to drive safely.
- any medication or treatments presently being received and possible side effects.
- any precautions that should be considered.

It would be advantageous for local school units to anticipate if a student may require a medical evaluation and coordinate it with any planned re-evaluations.

8. Who is responsible for coordinating information from special education, driver education, related services and student services about a child being considered for driver education?

The school-based committee has primary responsibility for planning the educational program for a handicapped student. This committee should include the school principal (or designee), teacher(s) of exceptional children, exceptional children program administrator (or designee), other staff members depending on

the needs of the student, and the parent(s). The school-based committee should compile and review relevant student information, obtain appropriate evaluation when needed, and make a recommendation to the administrative placement committee about the individualized education program for the student. The administrative placement committee gives final approval to the IEP and has the authority to commit financial or other resources.

9. What are the possible classroom and test modifications for handicapped students enrolled in driver education?

- . Classroom modifications - Hands-on activities and simulations will help students with learning problems understand concepts and practice critical decision-making skills. The special education teacher can be a resource for ideas on modifying instruction or written materials and may be able to reinforce skills in another class period. An educational interpreter might be required for hearing impaired students.
- . Test modifications - Specific test modifications for the in-class phase can be prescribed in the IEP. The test modifications are similar to those requested for other testing situations. Some possible modifications are:
 - answers recorded by a proctor,
 - student marks answer on the test,
 - special environment for test taking,
 - preferential seating in class,
 - oral test read by teacher,
 - use of student recorder,
 - extended time, and/or
 - test instructions given by an interpreter (hearing impaired).
- . Exam modifications - The Division of Motor Vehicles will give an oral version of the written test of driving knowledge upon request.

10. How can driver education vehicles be modified?

The driver education vehicle may be modified with adaptive devices which are specifically designed to compensate for the handicapped driver with a physical impairment. Possible modifications include the following:

- . seat modification
- . hand and/or foot controls
- . wide convex rearview and side mirrors
- . adapted steering wheels
- . extensions for ignition key and turn signals
- . use of an interpreter for hearing impaired students

Many assistive device companies make short-term loans to school driver education programs. A list of these companies is available from the Division of Health, Physical Education, Safety and Sports. Vocational Rehabilitation Engineers also have information on sources for adaptive devices.

Private vehicles cannot be used for driving instruction by school driver education programs except in specially approved situations.

Driver education guidelines state that no fewer than two students can be in a car for driving instruction. In the interest of the student and the instructor, it is strongly recommended that these guidelines be followed. If a student cannot sit in a car for extended periods of time, an arrangement should be worked out with two other students as passengers. The disabled student would drive first, then be dropped off at school. If one-to-one instruction is required, the IEP should include documentation of need and school administration and parent approval. The method of allocation of driver education instructors makes one-to-one instruction very difficult to schedule.

11. What resources are available to driver education teachers in working with handicapped students?

There are many resources available to driver education teachers working with handicapped students. These include:

- . Local special education and related services staff can assist the driver education instructor in working with individual students. Related services staff (e.g. occupational therapist, educational interpreter) may be able to "ride along" during the first lesson to make recommendations for instruction.
- . Workshops and courses on instructional techniques for handicapped students are available through local school systems, colleges and universities, and the Division for Exceptional Children.
- . Vocational rehabilitation counselors and engineers are excellent resources for working with handicapped individuals.
- . Organizations such as the Association of Driver Educators for the Disabled can provide driver educators with helpful information.

12. Who provides and pays for the transportation of handicapped students when driver education is scheduled after school hours?

As with non-handicapped students, this is the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

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K-9 Traffic Safety Education, Raleigh: North Carolina Department of Public Instruction.

North Carolina Physician's Guide for Determining Driver Limitation--North Carolina Driver Medical Evaluation Program, North Carolina Department of Human Resources, Division of Health Services, Epidemiology Section, P.O. Box 2091, Raleigh, N.C.

Publications related to the physically disabled of all ages. National Center on Employment of the Handicapped, Human Resources Center, Albertson, NY 11507.

- . Teaching Driver Education to the Physically Disabled
- . Hand Controls and Assistive Devices for the Physically Disabled Driver
- . Teacher's Preparation Course in Driver Education for the Physically Disabled
- . Evaluating Driving Potential of Persons with Physical Disabilities

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Test, D. W. & Heward, W. L. (1983). Teaching road signs and traffic laws to learning disabled students. Learning Disabilities Quarterly, 6, 80-84.

The Association of Driver Educators for the Disabled. Contact: David Harden, 33736 La Crosse, Westland, MI, 48135.

Van Products Incorporated, 100 Glenwood Avenue, Raleigh, N.C. 27603.
Provides free evaluations for physically challenged with respect
to transportation needs.

Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center, Fishersville, VA 22939.